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Local Government Bulletin

Managing Unwanted Cats and Dogs – Update on *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Bill 2008* and Local Government Pilot Studies

Purpose

The purpose of this Bulletin is to inform local governments of the introduction of the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Bill 2008* and to provide an update on the local government pilot studies.

Background

On 8 June 2008, the Premier announced that legislation would be introduced by the end of the year to make cat and dog registration and micro-chipping compulsory in all parts of the State. The development of this legislation coincided with the completion of a departmental review of Chapter 17A of the *Local Government Act 1993*. As a result of this review, it is proposed to relocate Chapter 17A to the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Bill 2008*.

Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Bill 2008

If the Bill becomes law, the commencement of the compulsory registration and microchipping provisions would begin with all South East Queensland Councils on 1 July 2009 rolling out progressively to the entire State no later than two years from date of assent.

Regulated dog (including dangerous, menacing and restricted dogs) provisions are proposed to apply to all local government areas upon the expected commencement date of 1 July 2009.

The purpose of the legislation is to provide a legislative framework to implement the Government's animal management policies, and in particular attempt to reduce high euthanasia rates of unwanted cats and dogs.

Feedback received from local governments has played a vital role in developing this Bill.

Subsequent to the completion of the pilot studies, the Government will review the legislation, with a view to incorporating issues arising as a result of the pilot studies and issues arising from further consultation with the community and key stakeholders.

The Bill currently includes:

- a requirement that all cats and dogs be registered;
- a requirement that all cats and dogs be microchipped at point of sale or transfer. The legacy population will not be required to be microchipped unless a transfer of ownership occurs;
- the administration of licenses for Permanent Identification Device (PID) registries by the Department;
- the administration of authorised implanters by the Department. Authorised implanters will not be expected to be veterinary surgeons. The Department is working with TAFE Qld to offer a microchip implanting course based substantially on 21478VIC – *Course in Microchip Implantation of Cats and Dogs*. It is envisaged this course will be available through TAFE Queensland by implementing a distance delivery approach utilizing On-Line, CD-Rom etc. Further details will be provided as soon as they are available;
- six month approved inspection programs;
- statutory muzzling exemption for greyhounds which have undertaken a course prescribed under regulation. Greyhound Queensland's Greyhound Adoption Program is the only course within the Department's contemplation at this point;
- clear review and appeal provisions relating to decisions made under this Bill. All decisions must in the first instance be reviewed internally before being appealed to a Magistrates Court;
- regulated dogs (which includes dangerous, menacing and restricted categories);
- general entry powers for the enforcement of the Act;
- entry onto private property without a warrant for the purposes of seizing dogs that behave dangerously or menacingly. (see Clause 112 of the Explanatory Notes for further clarification);
- the Bill explicitly provides for local governments to make local laws about cats and dogs;
- consultation with local governments revealed a small number of local governments wished to retain the ability to enact outright prohibitions on particular dogs. The Bill provides for local governments to make a local law prohibiting particular dog breeds and their crosses. As the Bill creates a regulated dog management framework based primarily on behaviour, local government's wishing to prohibit breeds will need to develop their own separate local law frameworks and enforcement mechanisms.

Pilot Studies

The Pilot Study Reference Group (PSRG) was convened to advise the Government on the most effective strategies local governments should adopt for the pilot studies. The outcomes of these pilot studies will be used to further inform policy and legislative development. The PSRG is composed of representatives from the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League, Canine Control Council (Queensland), LGAQ, Gold Coast City Council, Logan City Council, Townsville City Council and Moreton Bay Regional Council. The PSRG has met on several occasions and provided recommendations for the Government's consideration. On 11 November 2008, the Honourable Warren Pitt, MP Minister for Main Roads and Local Government announced the following funding allocation:

- Gold Coast City Council has been allocated \$77,000 to introduce an approved breeder permit scheme and a targeted education campaign that will focus on appropriate enclosures for pet cats,

- Townsville will receive \$68,000 to restart the CatScan program on Magnetic Island, which includes compulsory microchipping of cats over five months old and an education campaign.
- Moreton Bay Regional Council will receive \$86,000 to work with local veterinarians to promote cat desexing and to utilize the RSPCA's Education Mobile Unit and Portable Animal Welfare Service throughout the council area.
- Logan City Council has been allocated \$84,000 to construct a dedicated community animal desexing clinic.

These pilot studies will complement the planned introduction of a voluntary code of practice for pet shops and the CatSmart education campaign, all of which will help improve the management of unwanted cats and dogs in Queensland.

Communication Strategy

The Department has undertaken the following key communication strategies:

- Smart Services Queensland: A dedicated telephone number, 1800 467 561, will be available for all Queenslanders to ask questions surrounding the legislation from Wednesday 19th November 2008.
The Department is developing a dedicated web-site. The URL will be: <http://www.localgovernment.qld.gov.au/Laws/LocalGovernment/ManagingCatsandDogs.aspx>.
- The Department's web-site will also include a FAQ page.
- A dedicated Cats and Dogs e-mail address CatsandDogs@dlgsr.qld.gov.au is also available.

In addition, regular updates on the Pilot Studies and other cat and dog issues will be e-mailed to all local governments on a quarterly basis, beginning in March 2009.

Where to from now.

Local Governments are welcome to provide comments on the *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Bill 2008*. Should the Bill be passed local governments will be consulted on the development of the regulation in March/April 2009.

Some of the issues needing to be dealt with by the Department include:

- training documentation for local governments;
- licensing of PID registers;
- training courses for authorised implanters; and
- development and rollout of the State-wide regulated dog database.

To ensure ongoing policy and legislative development, the Government has undertaken, in conjunction with information obtained from the pilot studies, to review the direction of its animal management policies in late 2009 and late 2010. Council's will be invited to make submissions at the appropriate time.

General Contact information.

All submissions should be addressed to the Honourable Warren Pitt, MP, Minister for Main Roads and Local Government c/o:

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Further information

Specific local government enquiries on this matter should be addressed to Logan Timms, Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy and Legislation Division, Phone: (07) 3225 8078, Fax: (07) 3246 3639, logan.timms@dlgsr.qld.gov.au. The Department's postal address is PO Box 15031, City East, Queensland 4002.

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